

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 13088

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EWWT, UR, US

SUBJECT: SOVIET REPLY TO US PROTEST ON NONFULFILLMENT OF
MARITIME AGREEMENT

REF: A) MOSCOW 12377, B) STATE 190964, C) MOSCOW 13089

1. DCM, ACCOMPANIED BY ECON OFFICER, WAS CALLED TO MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AUGUST 18 TO RECEIVE SOVIET RESPONSE TO PROTEST NOTE, REFTEL B, REGARDING USSR NONFULFILLMENT OF THE MARITIME AGREEMENT. SOVIET NOTE (REF C) WAS PRESENTED BY ACTING CHIEF OF USA DEPT MIKHALOV. IN BRIEF INTRODUCTORY REMARKS MIKHALOV SAID THAT THE U.S. COMPLAINTS HAD BEEN EXAMINED CAREFULLY BY THE MINISTRY OF MERCHANT MARINE AND THAT THE ALLEGATIONS OF SOVIET NONFULFILLMENT WERE FOUND NOT TO BE JUSTIFIED.

2. DCM RESPONDED THAT THE SOVIET NOTE WOULD OF COURSE BE TRANSMITTED PROMPTLY TO WASHINGTON FOR CONSIDERATION, AND THAT HE WOULD NOT ATTEMPT A POINT-BY-POINT COMMENT. HE MADE CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT U.S. PROTEST WAS IN NO WAY AN ATTEMPT BY U.S. TO DERIVE UNILATERAL ADVANTAGE, NOR DID IT DEAL WITH "ARTIFICIAL" ISSUES, AS SOVIET REPLY ALLEGES. ISSUES ARE REAL AND ARE IMPORTANT. SPEAKING PERSONALLY,
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DCM THEN EMPHASIZED THAT THESE ISSUES ARE NOT ONLY

IMPORTANT FOR US-USSR MARITIME RELATIONS, BUT ALSO ARE OF CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE. HE REVIEWED HISTORY OF 1972 MARITIME AGREEMENT AND FACT THAT GUARANTEE OF ONE-THIRD PARTICIPATION BY U.S.-FLAG VESSELS WAS CRUCIAL IN PERSUADING UNIONS TO DROP LONG-STANDING BOYCOTT OF SOVIET SHIPPING. HE THEN NOTED THAT SOVIET NONCOMPLIANCE HAD ALREADY COME TO PUBLIC ATTENTION IN US AND THAT DEPARTMENT'S PRESS SPOKESMAN HAD RECEIVED QUESTIONS REGARDING THE SITUATION ON AUGUST 17. IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT IF THESE ISSUES ARE NOT SETTLED RAPIDLY, A SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL ISSUE COULD QUICKLY DEVELOP. SINCE IS IS IN THE SOVIET INTEREST TO AVOID SUCH A SITUATION, HE HOPED THAT THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES WOULD ACT PROMPTLY TO ELIMINATE THE CAUSES OF THE U.S. COMPLAINT.

4. MIKHAYLOV AGREED THAT THE MARITIME AGREEMENT HAS POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE BEYOND MARITIME RELATIONS, AND -- WHILE REITERATING THAT THE SOVIET SIDE IS FULFILLING ITS OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE AGREEMENT -- INDICATED THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THE URGENCY IN FINDING A SOLUTION TO THE CURRENT PROBLEMS.

5. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH SOVIET RESPONSE IS TOTALLY UNYIELDING, WE BELIEVE THAT OUR PROTEST NOTE MAY HAVE SALUTARY EFFECT BY PLACING OUR VIEWS ON THE RECORD WITH MFA AND THUS POSSIBLY STIMULATING POLITICAL PRESSURE ON MERCHANT MARINE MINISTRY TO RESOLVE PROBLEMS BEFORE THEY GET OUT OF HAND. IN ORDER TO KEEP OFFICIAL RECORD STRAIGHT AND TO KEEP PRESSURE ON SOVIETS FOR COMPLIANCE, IT WOULD BE DESIRABLE TO REPLY TO THE SOVIET NOTE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
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